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ABSTRACT

This brochure is intended to help teachers and parents prepare students for the North Carolina Open-Ended Assessments (in reading and mathematics) given at grades 4 and 8. The brochure states that teachers in grades 2-5 can use the information to prepare students for the open-ended assessments. This particular brochure focuses primarily on the reading portion of the assessment, which includes opportunities for students to read several passages and respond to questions across content areas. The brochure includes the following sections: "Background"; "Test Specifics"; "Reading General Rubric"; "Key Skills for Open-Ended Responses"; "Tips for Parents and Teachers"; "Test-Taking Tips for Students"; and "Questions for Critical Thinking and Response to Text." It notes that testing in grades 4 and 8 will allow North Carolina to align more with national testing as reflected in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), so that the state can know how well its students are performing relative to other students across the nation. (NKA)

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North Carolina Open-Ended Assessments:

Elementary English Language Arts — Grade Four

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North Carolina Open-Ended Assessment for Grade Four

The last time the open-ended test was given was the 1997-1998 school year to students in grades five and eight. It has now been changed to grades four and eight in order for North Carolina to align more with national testing as reflected in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). North Carolina needs to know how our students are performing relative to other students across the nation.

Background

The purpose of this brochure is to help teachers and parents prepare students for the North Carolina Open-Ended Assessments given at grades four and eight. Teachers in grades two-five can use the information in this publication to prepare students for the open-ended assessments. The open-ended assessments are designed to measure student performance in reading and mathematics. This brochure focuses primarily on the reading portion of the assessment. The assessment includes opportunities for students to read several passages and respond to questions across content areas.

- The open-ended reading assessment emphasizes comprehension, application, integration, analysis, and evaluation of information and ideas across content areas. It is designed to measure higher-level thinking skills and problem solving.
- Selections from literature, informational articles, content area articles, and consumer and practical materials permit assessment of reading for various purposes across genres.
- The assessment broadly measures curricular goals and objectives and requires integration of knowledge and skill from more than one curricular goal and objective.
- Students construct responses that are related to the passages, but require critical thinking, integration, and explanation beyond the specific passages.
- Students are required to analyze, explain, apply, interpret, and evaluate information and ideas to arrive at an elaborated response.

Test Specifics

The North Carolina Open-Ended Assessments will be administered on the same specified day statewide to all fourth and eighth grade students. Students will be given an assessment booklet which contains twelve items (six reading and six mathematics) at each grade level. Students have 90 minutes to read the passages and construct elaborated responses to the twelve items. Responses are scored using a rubric scale that varies depending on the complexity of the specific item but is based on a general four-point rubric.

Reading General Rubric

0 Answer is unresponsive, unrelated, or inappropriate.

1 Answer deals with material on a concrete, literal level that is accurate in most dimensions.

2 Answer deals with most aspects of the question and makes correct inferences, although minor errors may exist. Comprehension is on an inferential level. The key skills are synthesis and analysis.

3 Answer addresses all aspects of the question, uses sound reasons, and cites and explains appropriate examples. Uses skills of evaluation as well as analysis and synthesis.

Key Skills for Open-Ended Responses

Critical Thinking Skills

Organization: Arrange or order information so that it can be readily understood.

Analysis: Examine parts, patterns, relationships, and errors.

Synthesis: Combine information and ideas from the passages and own knowledge and experiences.

Generation: Go beyond the available information to determine what may reasonably be true. Generate a thought or reason and give examples from the passage(s) to support or elaborate response.

Evaluation: Assess appropriateness and quality of information and ideas. Check the accuracy of facts, the meaning or accuracy of author's statement, and value or logic of ideas.

Response Skills

Specificity: Use specific language. Be selective in word choice.

Citation: Cite specific examples from the passage to support thinking and reasoning.

Completeness: Answer all parts of the question.

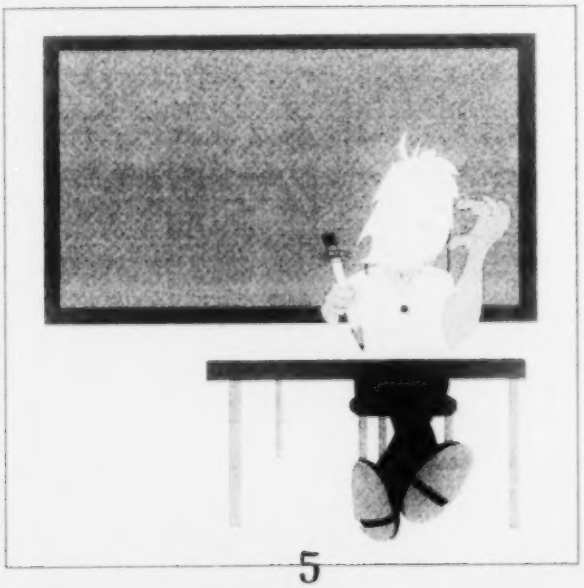
Tips for Parents and Teachers

- Model how you would obtain an answer by demonstrating the process.
- Explain what you do, how you do it, and why you do it as you read passages and answer questions.
- Require students routinely to provide text-specific support for their answers and responses in everyday reading and content area lessons.
- Incorporate the language of the assessment in daily conversation and activities. See Key Skills for Open-Ended Responses included in this brochure.
- Ensure that students are reading a variety of texts by providing opportunities and encouragement to read: novels, how-to-books, magazines, newspapers, informational texts, essays, letters, etc. and understand the purpose of each type of text.
- Ask students open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a single word, simple phrase, or sentence. (Why...? How do you know...? Explain... Tell me about... Give me some examples.)
- Decrease test anxiety by engaging students in discussions, encouraging high expectations, and exhibiting confidence in their efforts and abilities. Use the information and suggestions included in this brochure to get started.
- Have students create open-ended questions and responses from routine classroom activities and reading.

- Acquaint students with test-taking strategies. See Test-Taking Tips for Students included in this brochure.
- Encourage students to read widely and deeply for pleasure and for information.
- Encourage, motivate, or otherwise insist that students read independently outside of school for at least thirty minutes a day.
- Set aside time within the school day for self-selected, independent reading for students.
- Engage students in extended conversations and discussions about their reading, hobbies, and studies.
- RELAX! Encourage students to relax, but do their best. People do better when they concentrate on answering the questions rather than worrying about the results. Assessments such as the open-ended reflect on-going learning rather than short-term learning. The information included in this brochure reflects good teaching and learning strategies appropriate for a variety of situations.

Test-Taking Tips for Students

- Know the format of the test and/or questions.
- Know how many questions are on the test and how to budget your time.
- Practice budgeting time prior to the test.
- Read the title of the passage and frame first.
- Read the questions before reading the passages.
- Read and subvocalize (speak softly to yourself) the directions and questions.
- Read every word in the directions and questions.
- Read the articles/passages in order to answer the questions.
- Think of a response to each question and skim the articles quickly to locate the support for conclusions or inferences.
- Answer each question completely. Each question is scored individually.
- Use context clues for difficult vocabulary.
- Pronounce unfamiliar proper names as best you can and move on.
- Use all of the test time.
- Reread the questions, directions, and responses upon completion of the test as time permits.
- Answer each question. Do not leave a question blank.
- Check each portion of the test after completion of the entire test.



Questions for Critical Thinking and Response to Text

Narrative Text

AUTHOR

- What did you know about the author before you read the book? What new information did you learn about the author when you read the book?
- Why do you think the author wrote the book?
- Can you tell anything about the author from reading this book?

CHARACTERS

- Who were the main characters? Describe them in your own words.
- Select one or more characters. Tell why he/she is important in the story.
- Who do you know that reminds you of the characters in the book? Why?
- What changes do you notice in the characters as the story progresses? Are these changes reasonable or what you expected? Explain.
- What differences/likeness did you notice in the characters? Explain.
- Do people you know in real life behave like the characters? Explain.

THE STORY

Plot:

- In a few sentences, tell what happened in this story. In what sequence did the events take place?
- Did the story end as you thought it would? Explain.
- If you could change the ending to the book, how would it end? Why?
- Which chapter or event(s) do you think is/are absolutely necessary to the story? Why?

Setting:

- How would you describe the setting of the story?
- What time did the story take place: past, present or future?
- What specific words or phrases give you the best visual images of the setting?

Mood:

- What feelings did you have while reading this book? Explain.
- What words or phrases did the author use to make you feel as you did?
- What is the mood in the beginning of the book? What changes, if any, do you notice as the book progresses? Explain.

Style:

- Select one or more characters and tell how the author describes him/her/them.
- Did the author use any creative or unusual language in the book? Give examples.
- Were you able to form a clear picture in your mind of the characters and events from the information in the text?
- What vocabulary did the author use to enable you to visualize characters, settings, and/or events in the story?

Questions for Critical Thinking and Response to Text

Expository Texts

CONTENT

- What topic(s) did this book describe?
- Was the information easy for you to understand? Why?

ACCURACY

- Who is the author? What are the author's qualifications for writing this book? Explain how you know by giving examples.
- Does this book provide recent information? Are there better sources? Why?
- Give examples of specific clue words the author uses to let you know that he/she is stating an opinion or a fact.

STYLE

- Do you understand what the author has said? What information was most easy to understand and/or most difficult to understand? Why?
- Would you like to learn more about the topic? Why?
- Did the author include illustrations with the book? How were they helpful or not helpful?
- What could the author have done to make the book easier to understand?

Adapted from Hornsby, David; Sukarna, Deborah; and Parry, Jo-Ann A. (1986). **Read On: A Conference Approach to Reading**. Melbourne, Australia: Nelson. 160-162.

Note: See your Test Coordinator for **The North Carolina Open-Ended Assessment Sample Scoring Guide** for grades four and eight.

Note: Contact your elementary supervisors for a copy of the "Diagnostic Matrix for Instructional Planning (Grades 3-5)". See pages 7-9 for sample question stems.

If you have questions or need additional information, contact Dr. Mary R. Rose or Ms. Shirley L. Staten at 919.715.1888 (mrose@dpi.state.nc.us) or 919.715.5548 (sstaten@dpi.state.nc.us).